

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SCS-03

FBO-02 SCCT-01 AID-05 CCO-00 NIC-01 OC-05 OPR-01

USSS-00 SCA-01 A-01 OMB-01 SY-04 PC-01 IO-10 ACDA-05

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FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO USCINCEUR IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3193

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT

CINCUSNAVEUR

DIRNSA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0232

ADDIS ALSO FOR CHMAAG

FM SR ADVISOR, NORTH AREA MAAG ETHIOPIA

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, MILI, ET, US

SUBJECT: MILITARY SITUATION IN ASMARA (U)

1. (C) ETHIOPIAN ARMY. STRENGTH OF FORCES IN ERITREA WAS INCREASED
ON 16 FEB BY ARRIVAL OF ABOUT 500 TROOPS FROM THE TERRITORIAL ARMY.
THIS FORCE IS OF MARGINAL VALUE TO THE 2D DIVISION OR THE JOINT
HEADQUARTERS THAT IS DIRECTING OPERATION IN ERITREA. THE TERRI-
TORIALS ARE REPORTED TO BE POORLY TRAINED, ARMED WITH OBSOLETE
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ENFIELD RIFLES FOR WHICH AMMO IS VERY LIMITED, AND THEY HAVE NO
SUPPORT EQUIPMENT OR VEHICLES. OTHER GOVERNMENT FORCES - 2D DIVISION,

3D BRIGADE 1ST DIVISION, AND THE AIRBORNE UNITS - APPEAR CAPABLE OF CONTINUING TO CONDUCT MILITARY OPERATIONS WITH A REASONABLE DEGREE OF EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS. FIRE DISCIPLINE CONTINUES TO BE A MAJOR DEFICIENCY WITH THE TERRITORIALS BEING ACCUSED OF ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF CONTROL DURING THEIR FIRST CONTACT ON THE NIGHT OF 18 FEBRUARY. SMALL ARMS AMMUNITION IS BECOMING A GREATER PROBLEM AS EXPENDITURE RATES ARE EXCEEDING SUPPLY. HOWEVER, AMMO STORES ARE BEING REPLENISHED DURING PERIODS OF LITTLE ACTIVITY. IT APPARENTLY IS BEING FLOWN IN FROM ADDIS. OVERALL, THE HEADQUARTERS PERSONNEL OF 2D DIVISION APPEARED SOMEWHAT ANXIOUS OR TENSE DURING CASUAL CONVERSATIONS WITH MAAG PERSONNEL. THEY EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE DIVISION'S ABILITY TO DEFEND ASMARA, BUT THEY ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONTINUING EXODUS OF CIVILIANS FROM ASMARA.

A LEAFLET-DROP WAS CONDUCTED ON THE MORNING OF 19 FEB. SUPPOSEDLY ENCOURAGING THE CITIZENS TO REMAIN IN THE CITY AND RESTORE NORMAL BUSINESS AND COMMERCE. THE ARMY REMAINS FIRM IN ITS DETERMINATION TO DEFEND THE UNITY OF ETHIOPIA. 1ST DIVISION TROOPS WERE OBSERVED RETURNING TO ASMARA FROM THE DIRECTION OF KEREN AND THEY WERE SINGING, SHOUTING, DANCING AND WAVING FROM THE BACKS OF THE TRUCKS AS THEY MOVED THROUGH THE CITY. ALTHOUGH OBVIOUSLY STAGED, THIS DEMONSTRATION OF SPIRIT DID REFLECT THE SOLDIERS' READINESS TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT. THERE IS NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO INDICATE HOW THE ETHIOPIAN UNITS ARE CONDUCTING THEMSELVES IN OPERATIONS AGAINST INSURGENT FORCES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

2. (C) INSURGENTS. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT OPERATIONS BY GOVERNMENT FORCES HAVE HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ELF OR PLF. IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT THE ARMY HAS "PACIFIED" ANY OF THE COUNTRYSIDE, ALTHOUGH MILITARY CONVOYS CONTINUE TO MOVE INTO AND OUT OF THE CITY OF ASMARA. THE INSURGENTS HAVE DEMONSTRATED THEIR ABILITY TO CONDUCT SMALL SCALE ATTACKS WITHIN THE CITY AND THUS FAR NO CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN NOTED. THEY PROBABLY CAN INCREASE THE SIZE AND INTENSITY OF THEIR ATTACKS BUT SHOULD BE SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS

THEY ARE GETTING BY WITH LOW-LEVEL ATTACKS BY FIRE.

3. (C) SECURITY OF US PERSONNEL AND INSTALLATIONS. THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE SINCE THE LAST ASSESSMENT. THE FACT THAT THE INSURGENTS
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HAVE MADE NO DIRECT ATTACKS AGAINST US FACILITIES SINCE 7 FEB IMPLIES THEY ARE NOW MORE CONCERNED WITH ARMY TARGETS THAN WITH PROVIDING SOME SORT OF SIGNAL TO THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY.
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